

# Curio – FOM Foodies Popiah Lunch

*Good Chance Popiah* is a 'typical' local restaurant. Tucked away in an area known as Kampong Silat, it houses one of Singapore's oldest HDB estates. The restaurant's founder, Mr Hou Shen Hu, who recently celebrated his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday, is still very active in the Chinese community. You can catch him singing in Peking Opera performances at the Amoy Association on Saturday afternoons.

*Good Chance Popiah* was established in 1977 and, as is often in the case with local restaurants, Mr Hou used his mother's *popiah* recipe. This might be the reason this type of restaurant is known as *zi char*, a Hokkien term used here to describe a wallet-friendly home-style cuisine.

*Popiah* has its roots in China and is said to have origins similar to the sandwich. A Ming official occupied with his documents, had no time for lunch, so his wife chopped up some ingredients, wrapped them in a flour pancake and served this to her busy husband.

*Popiah* has three main components, a soft, thin paper-like pancake, a Chinese root called *bang kuang* cooked in a clay pot with many herbs, and an array of side dishes such as bamboo shoots, garlic, shrimps, honey, nuts and various sauces. This might sound like a strange combination, but ultimately the different flavours work perfectly together. Usually the *popiah* is wrapped and cut into five pieces. However, this restaurant offers a 'do-it-yourself' version. It requires a bit of practice to wrap the perfect *popiah*, combining all the ingredients without breaking the skin, but the very friendly staff was very helpful showing us how to do this.

The main ingredient, the *bang kuang* (also known as *jicama* or Mexican yam bean), is readily available at all local markets (it is a fantastic, crunchy and inexpensive ingredient for a salad). It arrived in the Philippines with the Spaniards and has many interesting properties such as improving



The Foodies group at the Good Chance Popiah Restaurant

the absorption of calcium. It is also very low in calories.

The restaurant is still run by a family member, the grandson, Boon Kaichun, also known as Ah Boy. During our lunch, he called and treated us to a lovely dessert. However, the 'DIY' *popiah* is not the only signature dish at this place, they are also known for their pork trotter *bee hoon*. What is the secret ingredient? Stewed *bang kuang*.



Bang kuang, also known as jicama or Mexican yam bean

Curio FOM Foodies will soon start a second Foodie group. If you are interested in joining, register at [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg) under activities/curio



The ingredients for making your own popiah



The waitress showing the group how it's done